



Report to the Governor

Public Water System Capacity Development Program

Rhode Island Department of Health

Office of Drinking Water Quality

Triennial Reporting Period
July 1, 2008 – June 30, 2011

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Copies of this report are available online at:

<http://health.ri.gov/programs/drinkingwaterquality/index.php>

Rhode Island Capacity Development Program Mission:
To participate in the development of sustainable water systems

OFFICE of DRINKING WATER QUALITY

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Introduction

The Department of Health and the Safe Drinking Water Act

The mission of the Rhode Island Department of Health (HEALTH) is to prevent disease and to protect and promote the health and safety of the people of Rhode Island. An essential aspect of this mission is the Public Water System Supervision Program (PWSS). Since 1976 the EPA has annually received a Congressional appropriation under section 1443(a) of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) to assist states, territories, and tribes in carrying out their Public Water System Supervision Programs.

In Rhode Island, HEALTH has been delegated Primary Enforcement Responsibility (Primacy) for the PWSS program. As such, the Office of Drinking Water Quality (DWQ) applies for and receives an annual capitalization grant. This grant allows HEALTH to develop and implement a PWSS program to adequately enforce the requirements of the SDWA and ensure that water systems comply with National Primary Drinking Water Regulations. Key activities carried out under the PWSS program include:

- developing and maintaining state drinking water regulations;
- developing and maintaining an inventory of public water systems throughout the state;
- developing and maintaining a database to hold compliance information on public water systems;
- conducting sanitary surveys of public water systems;
- reviewing public water system plans and specifications;
- providing technical assistance to managers and operators of public water systems;
- carrying out a program to ensure that public water systems regularly inform their consumers about the quality of the water that they are providing;
- certifying laboratories to analyze drinking water to determine compliance with regulations; and
- carrying out an enforcement program to ensure that public water systems comply with all of the state's requirements.

Description of Rhode Island's Capacity Development Program

In accordance with the 1996 Amendments to Section 1420 of the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), HEALTH has developed a Capacity Development Strategy which was implemented in August 2000. HEALTH's Capacity Development Strategy is an important element of the PWSS program. Through this strategy, the office of DWQ Capacity Development Program assist HEALTH in carrying out the activities listed above through targeted assistance programs. These programs are developed to help water system personnel acquire and/or maintain the technical, managerial, and financial capabilities needed to operate and manage public water system utilities effectively.

This report outlines the efficacy of the State's Capacity Development Strategy and progress toward improving the capabilities of public water system personnel. For purposes of this strategy, capacity means that a public water system has the technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capabilities to comply consistently with the statutory and regulatory requirements of the Safe Drinking Water Act. Capacity enables public water system personnel to plan for and provide water that is safe to drink today and into the future. The three major components of capacity identified in the 1996 Safe Drinking Water Act Amendments include:

<i>Technical Capacity</i>	A water system's ability to operate and maintain its infrastructure.
<i>Managerial Capacity</i>	The expertise required of the water system's personnel to administer the system's overall operations.
<i>Financial Capacity</i>	The financial resources and fiscal management that support the cost of operating the water system

Capacity Development Strategies and Goals

In Rhode Island, Capacity Development can be seen as the thread that weaves together HEALTH's drinking water program activities into a focused effort to assure new public water system capacity and strengthen existing water system capacity development. Overall, public water systems in Rhode Island have been successful in providing safe drinking water and improving their compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act. However, there is still work to be done, especially in assisting small water systems, with acquiring and maintaining technical, managerial, and financial (TMF) capacity on a short-term and long-term basis. The office of DWQ regulates approximately 490 public water suppliers in Rhode Island. This includes not only the major municipal water systems, but also, many other facilities such as schools, factories, restaurants, and day care centers that have their own water supplies. The program assists water systems in several ways by using the several components of the strategy. The components include:

- prioritization of need;
- outreach to encourage use of the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund;
- technical assistance in completing Consumer Confidence Reports;
- on-site assistance and trouble shooting through a Circuit Rider Program ;
- small water system operator training and certification;
- training to improve managerial capacity; and
- training to improve financial capacity.

The capacity development activities are focused on pro-active preventive measures that assist all water systems as well as troubled systems in non-compliance.



The office of DWQ has been implementing the Capacity Development Strategies and planning future strategies to more effectively meet the needs of public water systems. Historically, some of the challenges and barriers have been:

- consumer apathy and resistance to change;
- water system owner/operator apathy;
- lack of water system management and long range planning;
- lack of trained/certified water system owner/operators;
- water system mistrust of state involvement;
- bureaucratic procedures impeding assistance to water systems; and
- limited staff and lack of money.

Since Capacity Development Strategies have been implemented, there has been much improvement. The overall impact of the strategies is continuously evaluated. Indications of improvement against the baseline can be summarized as follows:

- Capacity Development Program components are successful as measured through improved compliance with Consumer Confidence Reports (CCRs), successful operator certification, and increased numbers of DWSRF applications & Project Priority Listings;
- systems approved for DWSRF for infrastructure improvements loans;
- additional training courses for systems have been implemented to improve the number of operators being trained and certified; and
- DWQ staff interaction with public water system personnel to determine system needs.

A Capacity Development Coordinator assures an integrated effort with all aspects of the drinking water program; enhancing communication with water systems and the public; managing contracts for direct technical assistance; managing contracts for general training; and utilizing water system assessments to target assistance efforts. A description of each component of the Capacity Development Program follows.

Identifying Systems in need of Capacity Development

As documented in the original strategy, HEALTH has in the past prioritized systems through a priority ranking method which assigns each system to one of four categories (Level 1, Level 2, Level 3, Level 4) based on a staff evaluation of the following criteria:

- compliance data (historical compliance reports, sanitary survey results, monitoring data, compliance officer input, and staff knowledge);
- DWSRF data (application documents, project priority list, disadvantage community status, intended use plans);
- Public Water System data (consumer confidence reports, source water assessments, operator certification status, consumer complaints); and
- information provided through annual license renewal applications.

Water system ranking does not rate systems from best to worst. It identifies systems that would benefit from the capacity development tools we have to offer. Level 3 systems that can be brought into compliance are the highest priority. Level 2 systems that can be advanced to level 1 with technical or financial assistance are the next highest priority. In the past it was determined that Level 4 systems could not be brought into compliance through capacity assistance. Consequently, enforcement action was required.

The office of DWQ has found that targeting systems most in need is an important method of maximizing our efforts. Most water systems are assigned to Level 2 and Level 3. There were three Level 4 systems and a number of Level 1 systems during the reporting period. The issues facing Level 2 and 3 systems are continuously assessed and assistance to these systems using Capacity Development Strategies is ongoing. The number of systems requiring assistance varies from year to year. However, since we have begun proactively making tools available we have seen an overall improvement in the managerial capacities of small systems. Several existing systems over the past several years have improved capacity, thereby progressing from a higher priority level to a lower one.

The Capacity Development program has developed an additional and very useful tool that enables DWQ staff to partner with system personnel, owners, and operators, to bring Level 4 systems back into compliance in conjunction with enforcement efforts. Once a Level 4 system is recognized, capacity development staff and DWQ management undertake an evaluation of the system's ability to provide safe drinking water to its consumers. Our assessment of the capacities required to effectively meet this obligation provides an analysis of their current and future sustainability. The evaluation involves a 5-step return to compliance process managed by capacity development staff.

The 5-step program applies the Principles of Effective Utility Management and are:

Step- 1 Analyze & Engage

Establishing the need for assistance by engaging DWQ staff in an evaluation process

Step- 2 Assess

Identifying capabilities & assessing current conditions

Applying attributes of sustainable water systems

Ranking of importance & graphing results

Capital improvement planning

Step- 3 Respond

Development of a corrective action plan

Step- 4 Implement

Carrying out the plan through capacity development facilitation

Step-5 Evaluate

Assessing results



Through combined capacity development and enforcement efforts the following Level 4 systems have proven the success of our 5-step return to compliance process.

- Paige Associates, Inc. PWS ID# RI 1900020
- Lawrence Sunset Cove Association PWS ID# RI 2980003

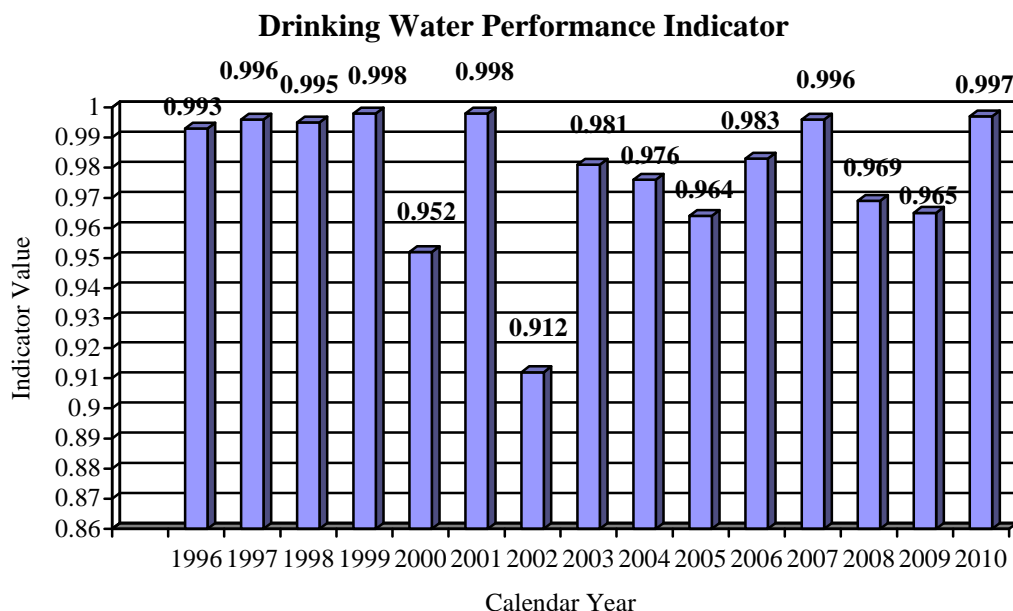
A third Level 4 system, Mohegan Water Association PWS ID # RI 1559519, has been unable to return to compliance. Through the 5-step process an alternative option was uncovered through which the Town of Burrillville assisted the association with an application for a Community Development Block Grant. Funds from this grant will be used to develop private wells for each of the affected residences, a viable solution for a group of homeowners who have proven unable to obtain the capacities required to own and operate a public water system.



Performance

Of all the requirements with which water systems are expected to comply, the most important is that of meeting minimum health standards. Each year, HEALTH evaluates the progress of the State's individual water systems as well as Rhode Island's Drinking Water Program in meeting these minimum health standards.

In making this evaluation, HEALTH uses a "performance indicator value," based on compliance with the Safe Drinking Water Act requirements for the entire year. The indicator value, shown to the right, is based on compliance with maximum contaminant levels (MCLs) and treatment technique requirements. Violations related to public education/public notice and monitoring errors are not included in this indicator. To make the indicator more representative of the state's drinking water quality, it is weighted by the number of days the system operated in compliance, the size of the population served by the water system, and the total number of days that the system was actually in operation. An indicator value of 1.0 would mean that all public water systems were in compliance with every MCL and treatment technique requirement for the entire year.



In addition to improvements in MCL and treatment technique violations many systems have made improvements and achieved compliance by adopting new by-laws, replacing malfunctioning equipment, installing new storage facilities, and resolving lead/copper issues. Technical assistance through the Capacity Development Program was the major factor in these improvements.

Public Water Systems Outreach

In addition to providing assistance to water systems through HEALTH contracts, the Capacity Development Program has been striving to enhance communication between the water systems and the office of DWQ in several ways. We have found that systems that are in communication with our staff have a lower rate of non-compliance issues, are more likely to seek training for owners and operators, and are more likely to pursue and complete system improvements. For more than five years, the Capacity Development Coordinator has been organizing quarterly regional meetings with public water system operators and office of DWQ staff. These meetings provide the opportunity for us to update system personnel regarding rules and regulations, and answer any questions they may have concerning their water systems.

Community Outreach

HEALTH maintains a contract with the University of Rhode Island Cooperative Extension (URI CE) and has continued to provide municipal capacity training and public outreach. URI CE, in collaboration with the office of DWQ, has developed various educational programs for local officials, water suppliers and residents. The following describes the outreach program:

- a)** A series of workshops linking the results of source water assessments and land use to the importance of water quality are held with local officials. These workshops include: Basic Training For Board, Council and Commission Members, Linking Land Use to Water Quality, Building Drinking Water Protection into Town Ordinances, Reading Maps and Plans, Using GIS Mapping for Conservation Development, and Using Computer Generated Maps in Project Review.
- b)** Fact sheets regarding drinking water issues of importance to the water suppliers and the public are distributed via mail, workshops, and their website;
- c)** Informative tools for residents regarding water quality concerns and educating the local “decision makers” and partnering with local water system officials to discuss water quality issues are provided;
- d)** Residential/private well water protection workshops are held around the state focusing on types of wells, basic care, well water monitoring and treatment of systems to protect a family’s health.

HEALTH also maintains contracts with industry professionals and organizations to assist water systems through on-site technical training and one-on-one managerial and financial training. These contracts provide the necessary assistance that system owners/operators need to maintain and improve the overall sustainability of their systems and capabilities of their personnel. The focus of these efforts is on water systems serving populations under 3,300, which make up approximately three quarters of the public water systems in Rhode Island. These water systems face many challenges due to extremely limited resources; unlike large systems that have greater resources, trained managers and operators, greater cash flow, and paid employees. These contracts have not only helped water systems achieve compliance but they have also prevented non-compliance through improved communication with the water systems and creating opportunities to troubleshoot issues before compliance issues occur.

CONTRACTS

These contracts have been developed to aid the Office of Drinking Water Quality (DWQ) in proactively addressing small water system sustainability issues and include the following activities:

Outreach to encourage use of the DWSRF
Preparation of consumer confidence reports
Circuit Rider troubleshooting of water systems
Small water system operator training
Small water system contract operator guidance
Small water system engineering assistance
Small water system management guides
Municipal training and public outreach
Small water system facility improvement plans

The following describes the contracts through which these activities are provided.

Atlantic States Rural Water and Wastewater Association (ASRWVA)

This contract was awarded May 28, 2009 for a 12-month period with the option of renewal for four (4) additional twelve (12) month periods at the exclusive option of the state, based on vendor performance and the availability of funds. The contract includes provisions for deliverables related to providing information and technical assistance to small water system personnel. It includes production and distribution of small system financial newsletters, public information meetings targeted toward water systems and town officials on water system improvement financing, development and conducting of continuing education courses for water system operators, conducting training courses pertaining to the roles and responsibilities of board members and elected officials, on-site technical assistance and training for 25-35 small systems per month, on-site circuit rider assistance provided to approximately 120 eligible water systems per year, targeted technical, financial and managerial training and assistance for potential or existing DWSRF borrowers, operator exam preparation courses, and preparation of consumer confidence reports for eligible water systems.

The results of this contract are as follows:

Task	Assisted
Small system assistance with SDWA compliance	10 system per month
On-site visits to small community and non-transient, non-community systems	25 - 35 visits per month
Technical assistance to potential SRF borrowers	6 - 10 systems per year
T, M, F training to potential SRF borrowers	6 – 10 systems per year

Two to three hundred system representatives and operators attended and received training credit for various courses and workshops, during each of the three years included in the reporting period. Courses included:

- Tank Maintenance, Repair and Cleaning
- Backflow Prevention Essentials
- Applied Math for Operators
- Infrastructure Replacement Planning
- Water System Basics
- New Directions in Water Utility Financing
- RI Operator Certification Exam Preparation
- The Groundwater Rule
- RI Water Operator Training
- Preparing for Water Emergencies
- Operator Regulations, Responsibilities and SOPs
- Roles and Responsibilities of Water System Board Members
- Regionalism, Consolidation and Costs Sharing

The ASRWWA Circuit Rider has been collaborating with our internal staff to:

- Target specific systems with lead and copper problems
- Conduct follow-up on-site visits after inspections and/or violations
- Focus on very small water systems and systems that have a history of non-compliance

The Circuit Rider plays a major role in our capacity development efforts by distributing training materials and handouts of rules and regulations; on-site tutoring to prepare operators for the VSS “very small system” exam; and providing training information for operator certification renewal credits. Thus far, the Circuit Riders’ on-site assistance to water systems has proven to be a valuable approach in eliminating some of the barriers that small system operators face in obtaining training. As a result of this effort, operators also received tutoring on-site to prepare for the VSS exam.

Each year, ASRWVA, in collaboration with DWQ staff, successfully assist approximately 69 small community water systems with development and production of their consumer confidence reports. ASRWVA also conducted extensive follow-up via e-mail, phone, and fax to make sure that the consumer confidence reports were distributed properly.

Circuit Rider program outcomes:

- Each month, the Circuit Rider visited approximately 25 - 35 water systems
- Site inspection deficiencies were resolved in a timely manner
- System personnel were assisted with a variety of lead and copper issues
- Water quality sampling plans were developed and submitted for approval
- System personnel were better prepared to assess and react to positive Bacti sample results
- Information, guidance and one-on-one training for public notification and the groundwater rule were provided when needed

A separate contract was awarded to ASRWVA on February 12, 2010 for a 12-month period with the option of renewal for four (4) additional twelve (12) month periods at the exclusive option of the state, based on vendor performance and the availability of funds. The contract includes provisions for deliverables related to development and production of Small Water System Management Guides and training.

ASRWVA staff is responsible for working with Capacity Development staff to complete ten Management Guides per contract year and ensuring that system representatives have a clear understanding of applicable regulations, obligations, and managerial and financial concepts covered in the guides.

The Guides serve as a day-to-day business practices guide for use by the owners, officials and employees of the water system and provides:

- a location for water system records;
- a process for evaluating deficiencies and improvements required for proper planning;
- a list of operation and maintenance duties for easy review and use by current and future water system personnel;
- a three-hole system for the ease of updating documents and records as required;
- a central filing system for the information, forms, templates, policies and procedures that will become standard operating procedure;
- a record of the systems technical, managerial and financial capacities required in the federal Safe Drinking Water Act; and
- a separately bound Resource Guide specific to each systems needs.

The table below provides a list of systems that have participated in the Management Guide program to date.

System	PWS ID
Heritage Home Park Co-op	2051311
Maple Hill Mobile Home Park	2973130
Prudence Island Water District	1592023
Sunset Cove Recreational Area	2000053
Slatersville Public Library	1615614
Abbey Lane Community Assoc., Inc.	1000009
Hebert Nursing Home Inc.	2000083
Wrights Farm Corp	2973119
Paige Associates	1900020
Harrisville Fire District Water Dept.	1858411
Chimera Inc.	2519424
Touisset Point Water Trust	1615636
Johnston Water Control Facilities	2980183
Lawrence Sunset Cove Assoc.	2980003
Saugatucket Springs	2980423
Foster Town Hall	2980322
Cooper Hill Office Complex	2980134
Meadowbrook Waldorf	2980422
Hillsdale Housing	2942525
Richmond Water Department	1000040

The Horsley Witten Group

Through our Emergency Preparedness and Security efforts the Horsley Witten Group was contracted to conduct Tabletop Exercises focused on local and regional calibration for water industry and emergency preparedness first responders. The exercise was attended by approximately 35 individuals and provided emergency specific capacity development assistance to representatives from four water systems.

Weston & Sampson Services, Inc.

This contract was awarded September 1, 2009 for one 12-month period. The contract includes provisions for deliverables related to development of a model cross-connection control plan template, cross-connection control circuit rider assistance, and public education materials. This contract was developed through the DWQ Public Water System Security and Emergency Preparedness program. As a result of this contract 55 systems attended an initial training enhancing the technical capacities of personnel in attendance. System implementation of the tools and templates varied.

Northeast Water Solutions Inc.

This contract was awarded May 1, 2011 for a 12-month period with the option of renewal for three (3) additional twelve (12) month periods at the exclusive option of the state, based on vendor performance and the availability of funds. The contract includes provisions for deliverables related to assessing and prioritizing public drinking water system infrastructure projects through the development and production of Small Water System Facility Improvement Plans. The contract is in the first year and the following systems are participating in the program:

Lawrence Sunset Cove Association - PWS ID # 298003	Pascoag Utility District - PWS ID# 1592020
Cooper Hill Office Park - PWS ID# 2980134	Paige Associates - PWS ID# 1900020
The Village on Chopmist Hill - PWS ID# 2943224	First Student, Inc. - PWS ID# 2980384
West Glocester Elementary School - PWS ID# 1900041	Ponagansett High School - PWS ID# 1583829
Shady Acres Nursing Facility - PWS ID# 2000165	Foster Town Hall - PWS ID# 2980322

Additional Contracts

In addition to the contracts already in place and discussed above the Capacity Development program has pending requests for additional contracts as discussed below.

Small Water System Contracted Services Guidance

Historically, the small water system owner and contract operator relationship has been ill defined. The system owner must rely on the operator to ensure proper operations and maintenance while the contract operator must adhere to a contractual definition of duties and responsibilities. A contract will be awarded approximately October 1, 2011 for a 12-month period with the option of renewal for one (1) additional twelve (12) month period. Through this effort a professional technical assistance provider will develop and publish guidance documents. These materials will help small water system owners enter into contracts that result in competent and appropriate water system operations and maintenance; and assist HEALTH and the Rhode Island Board of Certification of Operators of Water Supply Treatment and Distribution Facilities in protecting and promoting public health and safety through the effective application of this guidance.

Small Water System Engineering Assistance

The purpose of the Small Water System Engineering Assistance Program is to provide engineering services to assist small drinking water systems with the implementation of solutions to special situations occurring within their systems, particularly public health and safety concerns. A contract will be awarded approximately October 1, 2011 for the award of one 12-month contract with the option of renewal for two (2) additional twelve (12) month periods. The engineering contractor will complete final plans and specifications for water system improvement projects needed to comply with state and federal standards to protect public health. Eligible water system projects are varied and include but are not limited to new construction, renovation or replacement, or consolidation of systems. Eligibility priority will be given to those systems that have participated in the Small Water System Facility Improvement Plan program. The need for improvements will have been uncovered and documented in the Facility Improvement Plan and this program will provide the system with the qualified engineering services required to gain project approval.

Capacity Development and the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund

The contract, which was awarded to the Atlantic States Rural Water and Wastewater Association (ASRWWA) for outreach to encourage use of the DWSRF has made progress in its efforts. ASRWWA conducted informational meetings around the State to inform water systems of the DWSRF and offered assistance with the application process. They have provided additional assistance to small water systems regarding applying for DWSRF by following-up with systems that have not yet completed the application process. As a result of this effort, 41 individuals from various water systems attended two regional Trustee Trainings For Water Utilities and 24 individuals from various water systems attended the “Managing Your Utility During A Tough Economy” seminar last Spring, which highlighted the DWSRF and pertinent financial advice and information for water systems.

These projects range in size from \$470,000 to over \$1,000,000 which included distribution system repairs, meter read improvements, and pump station construction. There are several systems in the process of going through the application process.

ASRWWA has developed a DWSRF brochure for distribution to water systems and they also mail a quarterly newsletter with updates and information regarding the DWSRF, which has increased the awareness of the loan program. Over the past several years, the systems below have been approved for drinking water state revolving loan funds and have financed single or multiple infrastructure improvements.

Cumberland Water Department	\$5,750,000
East Providence Water Division	\$6,500,000
East Smithfield Water District	\$400,000
Kingstown Water District	\$520,000
Lincoln Water	\$2,000,000
Newport Water Division	\$3,500,000
North Kingstown Water Supply	\$4,800,000
Pascoag Utility District	\$179,000
Pawtucket Water Supply Board	\$5,935,000
Portsmouth Water and Fire District	\$500,000
Providence Water	\$13,250,000

Figures represent a combination of funds from the Drinking Water State Revolving Loan Fund and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009

State operator certification requirements improve capacity through the training needed to pass the initial examination and through the continuing education requirements needed for license renewal.

Due to the revised operator certification requirements being in effect for over five years, the program has continued to make strides toward achieving 100% compliance for the smaller water systems. Currently, the state is at a 98% compliance rate with operator certification. With the assistance of the Circuit Riders' on-site visits to systems, along with technical assistance courses, there are 425 operators who have been certified and trained to operate their systems in compliance with state regulations.

New England Water Works Association (NEWWA)

This contract was awarded August 5, 2009 for a 12-month period with the option of renewal for four (4) additional twelve (12) month periods at the exclusive option of the state, based on vendor performance and the availability of funds. The contract includes provisions for deliverables related to classroom setting and on-site training of small water system operators to improve technical, managerial, and financial capacities and assist with exam preparation.

As a result of this contract sixty-three operators attended and received training credit for the a variety of courses including:

- Preventive Maintenance for Centrifugal Pump Operation
- Technical Training and Very Small System Drinking Water Operator Exam Preparation
- Developing a Flushing Program to meet SDWA Requirements
- Understanding the Importance of Contact Time (CT) in Disinfection
- Where it all begins: Knowing & Protecting your Source Water
- Pumps and Pumping Overview
- How to Avoid Violations by Eliminating Pathogens in Your Water System
- Understanding and Complying with the Safe Drinking Water Act
- Using Computer Technology as a Tool to Operate Your Water System

Conclusion

Over 10 years have elapsed since Rhode Island has instituted its Capacity Development Strategy. The Strategy provides the framework for HEALTH and the Office of Drinking Water Quality to identify unique approaches that would facilitate the continuous sharing of knowledge and development of tools that have become so important to the provision of safe drinking water and sustainable water systems in our state.

This report has evaluated and described the activities of each component of the Capacity Development Program. Realizing that challenges are different for each type of public water system, HEALTH, our industry peers, and our partners at the EPA have taken steps to identify these challenges. Together, we aim to ensure that the programs we currently have in place continue to successfully address the needs of our systems, and the assistance we provide in the future is:

- targeted and pro-actively enhancing water system capacity,
- focusing on education and outreach, and
- strengthening collaborations between Capacity Development and other drinking water programs.

Together, Capacity Development and all of HEALTH's drinking water programs have had a substantial and positive impact on the health and safety of the people of Rhode Island.